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ABSTRACT

The 1992 annual report provides an overview of activities undertaken by offices of the New York State Education Department to promote accessibility for people with disabilities to Department programs and services available to the public at large. It also summarizes accomplishments resulting from the collaboration of various Department offices through the Intra-Agency Council. Major accomplishments included training over 500 Department supervisors on working with employees with disabilities and development of a Volunteer Internship Program, which provides people with severe disabilities with work experience in the Department's Office of Cultural Education. The first section, an overview, provides background information on the Intra-Agency Council and development and implementation of the Department Plan. Section 2 summarizes intra-office collaborative activities. Section 3 reviews the accomplishments that resulted from Department Plan implementation and the emerging issues to be addressed in next year's plans. The final section is on Council activities and summarizes issues addressed by the Council, Council accomplishments, results of the "Survey of Department Services to Employees with Disabilities," Council activities in response to the survey, and emerging issues. An attachment lists Intra-Agency Council members. (DB)

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ANNUAL REPORT ON

ACCESS

Annual Report on the Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services

ED 366 118

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York

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PREFACE

I am extremely pleased and proud to present the **1992 *Annual Report on the Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services.*** This report was developed by the Department's Intra-Agency Council as part of its evaluation of the implementation of the Plan during the past year. The Intra-Agency Council was established in September 1989 in response to the concern that Department programs and services were not as readily accessible to people with disabilities as they are to people without disabilities. The Council, with membership representing all areas of the Department, exemplifies the best in Department cooperation and collaboration.

The ***1992 Annual Report*** provides an overview of activities that offices within the State Education Department undertook during the last year to promote the accessibility of people with disabilities to Department programs and services which are available to the public at large. It also summarizes the accomplishments which have occurred as a result of the collaborative working relationships formed among various Department offices through the Intra-Agency Council and the emerging issues which will be addressed in next year's work plans.

Among the past year's accomplishments has been the training of over 500 Department supervisors on working with employees with disabilities. This training, developed at the request of Department staff, provided supervisors with an increased awareness of the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities, skills in supervising and evaluating employees with disabilities, Federal and State laws and regulations related to disability issues, and an awareness of Department policies and procedures related to such employees.

Another significant accomplishment of the Council has been the development of a Volunteer Internship Program which provides people with severe disabilities the opportunity to work as interns in the Department's Office of Cultural Education. For most of these interns, this is the first opportunity they have had to work alongside their nondisabled peers. This program is designed to provide participants with meaningful volunteer activity and vocational training in an integrated work environment. As a result of this program, several interns now have the confidence to begin to seek employment in an integrated setting and, in fact, one intern has recently been successful in obtaining employment. Furthermore, this program provides Department staff with an increased awareness of the abilities of people with severe disabilities.

In addition, the Department is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have the same access to information and materials developed by staff or to meetings, conferences, or training programs conducted by the Department. As a result, Department publications can now be provided, upon request, in braille, large print and on audiotape. Accessibility to Department sponsored meetings, conferences, and training programs has also been ensured by requiring that they be held at sites that are accessible to people with physical disabilities and reasonable accommodations, such as interpreters for the deaf, assistive listening devices and alternate print formats of written material, are provided upon request. The intent of these policies is to remove all barriers which prohibit the full participation of people with disabilities in the programs and services offered by the Department to the public.

In response to requests from Department staff, the Intra-Agency Council will be conducting a conference for all Department staff this year on the Americans with Disabilities Act and increasing access for people with disabilities to all Department programs and services.

This ***1992 Annual Report*** underscores the commitment of the State Education Department to ensure equal access to all Department programs, services, and employment opportunities to people with disabilities. It also reflects the continuing commitment of all Department staff to making programs and services available to all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Thomas Sobol

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1992 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PLAN FOR ENSURING ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ALL NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

This 1992 Annual Report was developed by the Intra-Agency Council as part of its evaluation of the impact of the ***Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to All New York State Education Department Programs and Services*** (herein also referred to as the "Plan") as implemented by all State Education Department offices since August 1991. This report is divided into four sections:

- **Section I - Overview:** provides background information on the Intra-Agency Council and the development and implementation of the Plan;
- **Section II - Intra-Office Collaborative Activities:** summarizes the accomplishments which have occurred as a result of the collaborative working relationships formed among the various Department offices;
- **Section III - Office Accomplishments and Emerging Issues:** summarizes the accomplishments, by office, which resulted from the implementation of the Plan and the emerging issues which will be addressed in next year's work plans; and
- **Section IV - Council Activities:** provides a summary of issues addressed by the Council, Council accomplishments, results of the **Survey of Department Services to Employees with Disabilities**, Council activities in response to the survey, and emerging issues.

SECTION I: OVERVIEW

Intra-Agency Council

The Intra-Agency Council, with membership representing all areas of the State Education Department, was established by Commissioner Sobol in response to the concern that Department programs and services are not as readily accessible to people with disabilities as they are to people without disabilities (Attachment A - Member List).

Since its creation in September 1989, the Intra-Agency Council has taken significant steps to ensure that all State Education Department programs and services are both **physically and programmatically accessible** to individuals with disabilities, regardless of an individual's age, gender, minority status, or disability. In addition to increasing access for people with disabilities who can benefit from department programs and services (external customers), the council has focused on these issues as they relate to department employees with disabilities (internal customers).

The council's goals are to increase the level of awareness of department staff on the issues and needs of individuals with disabilities and to facilitate the coordination and implementation of activities to improve access and service delivery to individuals with disabilities.

Development and Implementation of the Plan

The council implemented its ***Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to all New York State Education Department Programs and Services*** in August 1991. This departmentwide coordinated plan was developed through an interactive process which involved staff from every office of the department. This process resulted in the:

- identification of barriers people with disabilities encounter as they try to access department services and programs available to the public at large;
- identification of specific priorities related to removing these barriers;

- identification of activities under each priority that would remove these barriers;
- development of anticipated outcomes for each activity; and
- identification of the training needs of department staff on issues related to individuals with disabilities.

Following the development of the plan, subcommittees were formed within each department office to implement the plan. Each subcommittee included a representative of the Deputy Commissioner, council members from that office and additional staff appointed by the Deputy Commissioner to ensure that all programs and functions of the office were represented. In addition, representation on the subcommittees reflected staff with disabilities. These subcommittees, through the development of annual work plans, are responsible for evaluating the implementation of the plan annually and coordinating technical assistance and support activities within their respective offices.

SECTION II:
INTRA-OFFICE COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

A significant number of the accomplishments which have taken place in 1992 occurred as a result of the collaborative working relationships formed among various department offices as a result of the Intra-Agency Council. A number of these intra-office collaborative accomplishments are described below.

- ***Accessibility Reviews of Department Buildings:*** The Civil Rights Compliance Team of the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education collaborated with the Office of the President of the University and Commissioner of Education to review physical accessibility in accordance with Section 504 and ADA standards in the Cultural Education Center (CEC), Education Building, and Education Building Annex. As a result, a comprehensive physical accessibility plan was developed by the Division of Education Business Management Services. This systemized approach to identifying and addressing physical access problems will be used as a model for other Department-occupied buildings.

- ***ADA Questions and Answers for Educational Administrators:*** VESID, in cooperation with the other Department offices and the New York State Council of School Superintendents, developed a brochure, ***The Americans with Disabilities Act: Questions and Answers for Educational Administrators***. This brochure, which was sent to all educational administrators in New York State, answers questions frequently asked by public school administrators as they examine employment and educational practices to ensure that all students and members of the school community can benefit from activities conducted in the district.

- ***Center for Multicultural and Comparative Education:*** The center is working with VESID to identify an improved means of communicating with individuals with disabilities who may be interested in international education opportunities. The center has also met with staff from VESID to review grant opportunities for internationally focused programs for individuals with disabilities.

- ***Training Modules:*** VESID, in cooperation with the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education and the Teacher Training Centers, developed training modules to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educational professionals in teaching students with disabilities.

- ***Coordinators of Disabled Student Services:*** VESID, in collaboration with the Office for Special Education Services and the Office of Higher and Professional Education, held a plenary session for Coordinators of Disabled Student Services. Regional follow-up to the plenary session included the development of six new regional consortia across the State which are charged with looking systemically at providing improved and more timely support services for students with disabilities in two-year and four-year degree granting institutions.

- ***University Leadership Institutes:*** VESID, in cooperation with Office of Higher and Professional Education and the Office for Special Education Services, sponsored the University Leadership Institute. This Institute convened faculty from special education and vocational rehabilitation counseling preservice programs to discuss revised curricula to better prepare professionals to work with individuals with disabilities.

- ***Postsecondary Education Programs for Individuals with Disabilities Grant Award:*** The Office of Higher and Professional Education, in collaboration with VESID, prepared a grant proposal to enhance the development of career placement programs for students with disabilities in higher education programs. The U.S. Department of Education awarded $329,807 to the Department through this three-year grant. This funding will be used to enhance the role and capacity of the higher education career placement offices to arrange preemployment opportunities and successful employment placements in integrated settings for students with disabilities.

- ***Resource Guide for Adult and Continuing Education:*** VESID and the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education are developing a resource guide for all adult and continuing education teachers which will be distributed statewide. This guide will assist adult and continuing education teachers in selecting appropriate alternative teaching strategies and modifying classroom testing methods for people with disabilities enrolled in adult education programs.

- ***Increasing Access to Lifelong Learning:*** The Office of Cultural Education (OCE) and VESID developed a special edition of OCE's publication *Affinities* which focused on access to lifelong learning for people with disabilities. This joint project provided valuable information to over 15,000 professionals in the State's schools, museums, libraries, historical societies, and special education centers on cultural and educational programs which are successfully working to ensure that all people with disabilities have access to the same cultural and educational programs in our State as their nondisabled peers. For many people with disabilities, access to these community programs provides an important way for them to continue throughout their lives to learn and interact socially in the community.

- ***Electronic Networks:*** VESID and the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education have developed agreements to link the Part 200 database management system with VESID's management system to improve and share information and enhance program planning and services for individuals with disabilities. Specific accomplishments include:

  - ➤ Coordination of technology and management of information between the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education and VESID through a staff position shared by both offices.

  - ➤ Establishment of the electronic capability to provide information on assistive technology, best practices, and data resources to the Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRC), providers, Independent Living Centers, and agencies.

  - ➤ Establishment and piloting of networks for transferring and sharing data among adult providers in the State who provide services to people with disabilities.

- ***Regional Training Sessions for Occupational Education Teachers:*** The Division of Occupational Education and the Office for Special Education Services, in conjunction with VESID, have developed regional training sessions for over 200 occupational education and special education teachers. These sessions provided teachers with information on how to modify occupational education curriculum for students with disabilities appropriately placed within their classrooms.

- ***Volunteer Internship Program:*** This pilot internship program was established by the Office of Cultural Education (OCE), VESID, and the Center for the Disabled of Albany, NY. The program provides people with severe disabilities the opportunity to work as interns in the State Museum, Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, and the State Archives. For most of these interns, this is the first opportunity they have had to work

alongside their nondisabled peers. This program is designed to provide participants with meaningful volunteer activity and vocational training in an integrated work environment. Furthermore, this program provides OCE staff with an increased awareness of the abilities of people with severe disabilities. As a result of this program several interns now have the confidence to begin to seek employment in an integrated setting and, in fact, one intern has recently been successful in obtaining employment. During 1993, this program will be expanded into several other department offices.

- ***Funding to Increase Access to Adult Centers for Comprehensive Education and Support Services (ACCESS):*** The Office of Higher and Professional Education and VESID awarded approximately $500,000 to ACCESS Centers to increase physical and programmatic accessibility for people with disabilities. This award also provided funding to ensure that ACCESS Directors and Counseling staff received training on ***Identifying Adults with Learning Disabilities*** and ***Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities***. Training was also provided on ***Career Counseling for Adults with Learning Disabilities to ACCESS Center staff and staff from Counseling, Assessment*** **and Support Services for Education and Training (CASSET)** Sites.

- ***Alternative Testing Modifications for Professional Licensing Examinations:*** The Office of the Professional Credentialing provided alternative testing modifications to approximately 200 professional licensing candidates with disabilities during the last year. As a result of increased consultation with national professional organizations, VESID and other Department offices, the range of modifications available was increased. VESID also worked cooperatively with the Office of Professional Credentialing to ensure that the appropriate modifications were made for VESID consumers. In addition, the Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped within the Office of Cultural Education made its equipment and resources available for modifications to licensing examinations.

- ***Multicultural Data Base:*** VESID assisted the Office of Cultural Education in the development of a survey designed to identify multicultural educational resources for use by teachers statewide in a data base. The multicultural educational resources will provide an interdisciplinary approach to teaching the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live in a culturally diverse society. These resources reflect the cultural diversity among African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians, whose histories, art, culture, etc., are currently underrepresented in the current education system. A major focus of the survey was to identify multicultural educational resources which would be accessible, both physically and programmatically, for students with disabilities. These resources included books, films, archives, software, human resources for oral histories, historical sites, etc.

SECTION III:
OFFICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Since August 1991, a number of major department activities to increase access to individuals with disabilities have occurred as a direct result of the Intra-Agency Council's implementation of the plan. Similarly, the council also focused its efforts on identifying new access issues and concerns (emerging issues) for future resolution. Highlights of the **accomplishments** of each major department office which occurred in 1991-1992 and the **emerging issues** identified for 1992-1993 follow.

Office of the President of the University and Commissioner of Education

Accomplishments

- ***Ensuring the Accessibility of all Department Owned or Leased Space:*** In response to the concerns of employees with disabilities and the ADA, the Division of Education Business Management Services developed an action plan to improve the accessibility of all State-owned and leased buildings. This plan includes the required self-evaluation under Title II of the ADA, structural and nonstructural changes, public notice, installed signage, etc. Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts, where the department currently leases space, are also under review.

- ***Access to Board of Regents Documents:*** The Office of the Board of Regents, upon request, provides public documents from the meetings of the Board of Regents in alternate formats including, large print, braille, and audio cassette.

- ***Access for People who are Deaf or Hearing Impaired:*** The **Department Telephone Directory** has been revised to include a current listing of all Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) numbers and instructions on how to use a TDD, as well as information and instructions for using the New York Relay System for the Deaf. Similarly, this information has also been included in the ***Directory of State Education Department Programs and Services.*** Training for many Central Administration offices has been provided for both professional and support staff on how to use TDDs, the Relay System, and courtesy in responding to calls from people who are deaf or hearing impaired. This information helps department staff communicate more effectively with members of the public who are deaf or hearing impaired.

- ***Affirmative Action for Department Employees with Disabilities:*** The Office of Affirmative Action, with the assistance of the Intra-Agency Council, revised the Department's Affirmative Action policy related to the employment of qualified individuals with disabilities. The revised policy includes simplified procedures to assist employees in obtaining reasonable accommodations in a timely manner, ensures that employees are aware of their legal rights to such accommodations, and ensures that fiscal considerations do not affect an individual manager's decision to pursue a reasonable accommodation request for one of his or her employees. All employees receive a copy of this policy annually. Furthermore, over 500 department supervisors have received training on this policy and related issues under the rubric, ***Working with Employees with Disabilities***.

- **Accessibility to Department Publications and Information:** The department is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities have access to information and materials developed by department staff. The department's ***Nondiscrimination Policy Statement,*** which is included in all department publications, has been revised to inform the public that all department publications are provided in a variety of accessible formats, upon request. As a result, department publications, including materials of the Board of Regents, can now be provided in braille, large print and on audiotape.

- ***Accessibility to Department-Sponsored Conferences, Meetings, and Other Events:*** The department is committed to making sure that all department-sponsored conferences, meetings, forums,

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and public events are held at sites that are accessible to people with disabilities and that reasonable accommodations such as interpreters for the deaf, assistive listening devices, and alternate formats of written material are provided upon request. Department policy has been developed which requires management staff to schedule these events only at sites that are accessible and that a statement on the availability of reasonable accommodations and the accessibility of the site be included in all event notices. Similarly, a memorandum was issued to all department employees as a reminder and reaffirmation of the department's commitment to ensure that all offices consider the physical accessibility needs of colleagues with disabilities when planning department-sponsored social functions such as holiday parties and receptions.

- ***Emergency Action Plans:*** In August 1991, **Emergency Action Plans** were reissued to include recommendations made by the Intra-Agency Council regarding persons needing special assistance. A person who needs special assistance is anyone who may have difficulty in emergency situations because of a disability, injury, or illness. These ***Emergency Action Plans*** provide department employees with information needed to take appropriate action when an emergency occurs. They address the safety of all department employees, including employees in need of special assistance at all department locations.

- ***Access Activities Initiated by the Center for Multinational and Comparative Education:*** The center reviewed its programs and revised procedures to encourage people with disabilities to participate in international educational opportunities. All scholarship forms now include a statement that all program orientation sites are accessible. The center is also working with colleagues in other countries to ensure that the needs of scholarship recipients with disabilities are met.

Emerging Issues

- The department requires additional fiscal resources to complete structural modifications to department offices to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities according to the requirements of the ADA.

- The department needs to address physical accessibility of department offices in local education agencies.

- The department needs to address its role in providing technical assistance to public and nonpublic schools on accessibility issues which are emerging as the department undertakes its ADA evaluation.

Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID)

VESID provides technical assistance to the Intra-Agency Council and, as part of its mission, works with all offices of the department to increase the access of all persons with disabilities, regardless of age, disability or minority status, to the complete range of services offered within the New York State Education Department. VESID's mission also includes a responsibility to coordinate lifelong educational services to persons with disabilities. The accomplishments cited below reflect VESID's role in providing technical assistance to department offices to increase access for people with disabilities and provide support for the work of the Intra-Agency Council.

Accomplishments

- ***Technical Assistance to the Intra-Agency Council:*** Assistance is continually provided to the council in the following areas:
  - ➤ development of the ***Plan for Ensuring Access for Individuals with Disabilities to all Department Programs and Services.***
  - ➤ establishment and support of subcommittees in all department offices to implement the plan.
  - ➤ coordination of all of the activities of the Intra-Agency Council, including the evaluation of the plan.

- assistance in the development of department policies on conference accessibility, social function accessibility, affirmative action plan; emergency action plans and the development of recommendations on ensuring reasonable accommodations to department employees and the public.
- development of the survey on **Department Services for Employees with Disabilities**. This survey, distributed in February 1992, asked employees with disabilities about the availability of reasonable accommodations, office accessibility and promotional opportunities. Analyses of the results of the survey were reported to the Intra-Agency Council and formed the basis of a Cabinet-level discussion on recommendations to improve the provision of reasonable accommodations to department employees with disabilities.
- identification, through a survey of all Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs) located throughout the department for inclusion in the 1992 edition of the Department Telephone Directory. Also included was a description of how to use the New York Relay System for the deaf.
- identification, through a survey, of the number of interpreters for the deaf for the deaf hired by department offices and the attendant costs of such services for department-sponsored conferences, forums and public meetings.
- identification of accessible conference and meeting sites throughout the State for department initiatives. This assistance included identifying potential sites, conducting on-site accessibility evaluations, locating assistive listening devices and interpreters for the deaf for the meetings.

- ***Additional Funds Secured for Department Offices:*** Assistance was provided to department offices, Independent Living Centers, ACCESS Centers and others to identify potential sources of grant and foundation funds. VESID staff brokered technical assistance to department offices in developing grant proposals which would improve accessibility to department programs and services for individuals with disabilities. During 1992, eight grant applications resulted in additional funding for department offices.
- ***Safety of VESID Employees and Consumers:*** In cooperation with the Office of General Services, VESID's emergency procedures have been reviewed and training is being provided to staff to ensure the safety of all persons with disabilities and people who have special needs working in or visiting VESID regional or central facilities. Emergency procedures for each office have been revised, based on department guidelines, and disseminated to staff. Training has been provided to all central office fire wardens and marshals on these procedures. A training program to be used by all supervisors in the VESID central office is being developed.
- ***Training on the Use of TDDs, New York Relay System:*** Training was provided to almost 60 department staff on how to use TDDs and the New York Relay System for department professional and support staff.
- ***Training on How to Acquire an Interpreter:*** Training was provided to almost 40 department staff on providing reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA, and how to acquire an interpreter for the deaf for a department-sponsored meeting, conference or forum.
- ***ADA Information:*** Articles were provided on the ADA for publication in a number of department publications. In addition, information such as the ***Americans with Disabilities Act Handbook*** and other technical assistance publications have been provided to over 500 department staff. Many of these materials were made available in a variety of formats, such as audiotapes, large print and braille. Training on the ADA was also provided for 63 college staff representing 43 campuses.
- ***Resource Guide for Regents Policies on Linking Services:*** A comprehensive resource guide is being developed for the implementation of each policy on linking services for students with disabilities as they prepare to make the transition from school to work, postsecondary opportunities, or adult services. This resource guide will contain background information, an overview of the program area, actions being taken by the State Education Department, existing resources to

implement the policy, and relevant references that provide theoretical and application bases for each policy. As State and Federal policies on transitional services are finalized, operational procedures will be added to the Resource Guide for field dissemination.

- ***Regional Linkage Activities:*** VESID staff assigned to eight regions of the State continue to implement the Regents policies throughout the State. Staff are located at a variety of sites including special education offices, VESID District Offices, Independent Living Centers, ACCESS Centers, and the New York City Board of Education. Their efforts have included working with parent networks, providing technical assistance for transitional planning efforts at local levels, providing ongoing assistance to special education, adult and continuing education, college and university programs, occupational education, and local interagency consortia regarding issues and services to consumers with disabilities.

- ***Data Base of Accessible Sites:*** A data base has been developed of accessible conference and meeting sites throughout the State. This data base is made available to all department offices biannually. It will be updated periodically to assist such offices in identifying meeting and conference sites that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Technical assistance has also been provided to department offices in arranging reasonable accommodations requested by participants in department conferences and meetings.

- ***Instruction for Preservice Programs:*** Four modules have been developed for use in vocational rehabilitation and special education preservice programs. The four modules are Organization and Administration, Access to Services, Development of Programs, and the Transition Process.

- ***Clearinghouse Established:*** A clearinghouse mechanism is being established for individuals with disabilities, their families, and providers. This clearinghouse will provide a single point of inquiry and information dissemination for adult program information; outreach and training for parents and students with disabilities on a wide range of programs and services available to such students and their families; and linkages with regionally based information systems, including job information and referral services. Information will also be provided in languages other than English. This clearinghouse will also address the needs of individuals with disabilities who are not currently students in special education.

- ***Alternate Format Materials:*** VESID has provided assistance to several offices in developing alternate print formats including braille, large print, audio cassettes and electronic file on disk. All department publications include a statement informing readers that the publication is available in a variety of alternate formats and provides the name of who to contact to request such formats.

Emerging Issues

- VESID needs to continue to work with all offices within the department to increase access for people with disabilities to the programs and services that are available to the public at large.

- VESID needs to continue to work with all offices within the department to increase access for people with disabilities to lifelong learning opportunities. The ability of people with disabilities to access these opportunities through museums, libraries, other cultural institutions, community colleges, universities, and community-based organizations significantly impacts on their ability to participate within their communities and continue to interact with their nondisabled peers throughout their lives.

- VESID needs to encourage people with disabilities to consider careers as vocational rehabilitation counselors and counselor assistants.

- VESID needs to evaluate the accessibility of its District Offices to enhance the access of people with disabilities to meetings and counseling sessions with vocational rehabilitation counselors.

- VESID must provide training for staff within respective offices of the State Education Department on the process for students as they transition from secondary schools to adult services, postsecondary opportunities or employment.

- VESID needs to work with all department offices to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Department and the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD). This MOU creates the conditions for bringing needed services into local schools as service settings which often prove most convenient to persons with disabilities and

their families. As a result persons with developmental disabilities will be able to parlicipate in lifelong learning through greater access to school facilities and programs. To implement this MOU, department offices must develop joint initiatives and encourage the educational community to develop cooperative efforts to increase access for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Office of Cultural Education (OCE)

Accomplishments

- ***Access in the Museum:*** The Museum's systematic approach to improving accessibility for all visitors to Museum exhibits was the result of including: (1) access as an integral part of the Museum's strategic plan; and (2) establishment of a Museum Access Committee which undertook specific activities to remove barriers to exhibits thereby increasing access for visitors with disabilities.
- ***Library Projects Related to Developmental Disabilities:*** As an outgrowth of a Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) grant, the Division of Library Development compiled a resource list and provided training for librarians to help parents in the prevention and early intervention of disabilities. These activities will lead to the establishment of parent information centers in at least three locations and the funding of five minigrants to libraries funded by DDPC.
- ***Access to State Archives and Records Administration (SARA) Training:*** Accessibility is addressed in SARA's new external programs. All of the more than 130 statewide training programs conducted in 1991-92 were held in accessible sites. Registration forms and logistical procedures now routinely address reasonable accommodation and accessibility needs.
- ***Video Programs on Access:*** Educational Television and Public Broadcasting produced and aired video programs and public service announcements on access, including a ***New York Learns*** program on employing people with disabilities.
- ***Medical and Health Catalog Available in Braille and Large Print:*** The Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (LBVH) produced the first large print and braille catalog of health and medicine related books since 1979. The catalog will be offered nationwide.

Emerging Issues

- OCE needs to explore how state-of-the-art technology can be used to improve access to public broadcasting, library, museum, and archival programs for New York State citizens with disabilities.
- OCE needs to improve communication within its office, the department and with constituents regarding accessibility issues. OCE needs to develop a mechanism to ensure adequate, consistent and representative input from its constituents with disabilities.
- There needs to be a fund-raising plan to support OCE access initiatives.
- OCE needs to explore ways of measuring the results of access initiatives.
- OCE and OMRDD need to work cooperatively to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Department and OMRDD to enable persons with developmental disabilities to participate in lifelong learning activities available within their communities through libraries, museums, and historical societies.

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Office of Higher and Professional Education

(A new combination of the elements of the former Office of Higher and Continuing Education and the Office of the Professions)

A recent Department reorganization has resulted in a partial realignment and reconsolidation of portions of the Office of Higher and Continuing Education and the Office of the Professions into the *Office of Higher and Professional Education*. This reorganization eliminates overlap in services and reflects the structure of the Regents Committees. The newly reorganized Office of Higher and Professional Education is responsible for coordination and regulation of New York's extensive system of postsecondary education. Because this reorganization only recently occurred in summer 1992, the accomplishments for 1991-1992 reflected in this report are listed under the former Office names: The Office of Higher and Continuing Education and the Office of the Professions. The emerging issues identified for 1992-1993 for these two Offices are listed under the newly titled Office of Higher and Professional Education.

Office of Higher and Continuing Education

Accomplishments

- ***Directory of Support Services for College Students with Disabilities:*** Staff prepared and distributed the **Directory of Higher Education Services for College Students** to secondary schools, colleges, libraries, and others for use in identifying colleges providing programs and support services needed by students with disabilities. A memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner transmitting the directory to all higher education institutions in the State urged them to provide such services and to train faculty and administrators to work with students with disabilities. A second memorandum emphasized the importance of describing such services and programs clearly in catalogues and other student materials.
- ***Registration Visits to Colleges:*** Department teams making registration visits to colleges in the public and independent sectors included individuals with expertise in serving college students with disabilities. When their reports identified programs or services needing improvements, the department indicated such need in its communications with the institutions and is following through until improvements are made.
- ***Accessibility Needs of Individuals with Disabilities:*** All Requests for Proposals issued by the office now require applicants to describe how they will address the needs of individuals with disabilities, and institutions which are awarded funds administered by the office are required to ensure that their programs will be accessible by persons with disabilities.
- ***Increased Access to Teacher Certification Examinations:*** The New York State Teacher Certification Examination Program is being developed with provisions to accommodate the needs of candidates with disabilities through the use of alternative testing modifications.
- ***Regents College Degree Opportunities:*** The Regents College conducted information and training sessions and participated in educational fairs to make more widely known the opportunities available through Regents College Degrees. VESID counselors in the Albany area began referring some of their consumers to the Regents College for advice, and two VESID consumers initiated the enrollment process.

Office of the Professions

Accomplishments

- ***Information on Alternative Testing Modifications for Licensure Candidates:*** Information, which will serve as the foundation for developing workshops for the State Boards for the Professions on alternative testing modifications available for licensure applicants and examination candidates, has been gathered from a variety of sources, including:
  - ➤ national professional organizations;
  - ➤ other states and jurisdictions;
  - ➤ testing offices within the Department;
  - ➤ other State agencies; and
  - ➤ Clearinghouse on Licensure, Enforcement, and Regulation (CLEAR).

- ***Guidelines for Alternative Testing for Professional Licensing Examination Candidates:*** After a thorough review of the policies of other states, national organizations, and the department, the Office of the Professions established written guidelines for alternative testing modifications for professional licensing examination candidates. This has resulted in a simplified and standardized process for responding to candidate requests. When published this spring, it should greatly increase the awareness of potential candidates, preparatory institutions, and the professions of the availability of testing modifications, the rights of individuals with disabilities to these modifications, and the process required for such requests.

- ***Data Base Established for Alternative Testing Modifications:*** The creation of a data base to track the provision of alternative testing modifications has, for the first time, provided the Office of the Professions with the information necessary to determine the effectiveness of testing modifications made at professional licensing examinations. This information will prove invaluable in future validation studies of the types of test modifications made for these examinations.

- ***General Communications Meetings on Alternative Testing Modifications:*** General communications meetings have been held with all staff who advise candidates to inform them of the process for alternative testing modifications and to ensure that candidates with disabilities are provided with appropriate information and referral.

- ***Satisfaction Survey for Candidates with Disabilities:*** The ***Reasonable Accommodation Satisfaction Survey*** was developed and is now provided to all individuals receiving alternative testing modifications during professional licensing examinations. These surveys are voluntary and anonymous. To date, all responses by candidates have been extremely positive.

- ***Appeals Process Established for Candidates with Disabilities:*** The Office of the Professions developed an appeals process for candidates whose initial requests for alternative testing modifications on licensure examinations were denied or modified.

- ***Training for Supervisors on Working with Employees with Disabilities:*** Supervisory staff who deal directly with professional licensing candidates attended supervisor's training entitled, ***Working with Employees with Disabilities***.

- ***In-service on the Americans with Disabilities Act:*** In-service training was held for the Deputy Commissioner, Board Secretaries, and senior managers by an attorney from Counsel's Office on the impact and implications to the professions of the newly passed ADA.

- ***Rights of Candidates with Disabilities:*** A review of handbooks for the professions was conducted to assure that candidates with disabilities are informed of their rights and the related department procedures. Expanded statements were prepared for future publications.

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Emerging Issues of the Office of Higher and Professional Education

The following emerging issues reflect the initiatives of the newly formed Office of Higher and Professional Education in 1992-1993.

- The Office of Higher and Professional Education will provide assistance to colleges and universities in developing a more effective means for serving students with disabilities.
- The Office of Higher and Professional Education will assist individuals with disabilities in gaining access to professional careers by ensuring that appropriate alternative means of examination for licensure or certification are available.
- The State Boards for the Professions should be fully informed of the ADA so that they may advise the Office of Higher and Professional Education of the implications for their professions and their licensing processes.
- The State Boards for the Professions are interested in investigating the opportunities for expanding access for persons with disabilities in their professions.
- The Office of Higher and Professional Education needs to clarify responsibility for final determination of requests for alternative testing modifications on examinations with national organizations holding copyright to examinations.
- As responsibility for professional licensing examination administration shifts to national organizations and private vendors, the Office of Higher and Professional Education needs to develop procedures to assure that the department's alternative testing guidelines are consistently applied.
- The Office of Higher and Professional Education needs to investigate the potential need for a TDD for the Customer Services Unit to facilitate communication with persons who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- All applications, form letters, and other documents sent to applicants and licensees should be reviewed and revised, if necessary, to advise persons with disabilities of their rights and related department procedures.

Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education

Accomplishments

- ***Increasing Access to Compensatory Education:*** The monitoring of compensatory education programs has been revised to include a review of access for students with disabilities to such programs. The Program Information Report (PIR), which collects all data on compensatory education programs in local school districts, has been modified to include information on services for students with disabilities. Data can now be retrieved by districts and the State on the number of students with disabilities served in compensatory education. Guidance is being given to school districts to assist in determining how to appropriately provide compensatory education services to students with disabilities.
- ***Accessibility Self-Assessment for Schools Districts:*** A compliance self-assessment, including an access checklist and other resources, was developed by the Civil Rights Compliance Team to help districts examine and remove barriers to accessibility. In addition, administrators from five districts and one BOCES were trained and the self-assessment was field tested in these districts.
- ***Procedure to Review Documents for Accessibility Compliance:*** A standard operating procedure policy has been developed to ensure that all documents developed in the office are consistently reviewed for compliance with Federal laws and regulations, State laws and regulations, and department regulations related to people with disabilities. The policy is presently being reviewed and will be disseminated in 1992 as a guide for document preparation throughout the office. When implemented, this policy will ensure that all documents, policies and publications are consistent with applicable accessibility requirements and that such documents positively reflect on people with disabilities.
- ***State Plan Revised:*** The State Plan for implementing the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied

Technology Education Act and the 1993 fiscal year Requests for Proposal were revised to ensure compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding access for individuals with disabilities.

- ***Information Dissemination:*** Advocacy groups for children with disabilities received the Parent Partnerships Policy Paper and approximately 800 people will receive information and handouts related to providing developmentally and individually appropriate strategies for teaching young children with special needs.

- ***Increasing Access to Preschool Programs:*** The Office has been advocating for providing developmentally appropriate programs which serve children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment with their nondisabled peers. This advocacy has included ongoing technical assistance and training. This training is being provided on-site to the New York City SuperStart Plus Program to ensure the integration of four-year-old children with disabilities in a developmentally appropriate program tailored to meet the strengths and needs of all participating children. Specific accomplishments include:

  - ➤ Inclusion of Department staff from the Division of Child Development Services in staff development sessions for New York City SuperStart Plus Programs. These programs will include all the administrative, clinical and instructional support staff in the participating schools, administrators of Committees on Preschool Special Education and Early Childhood Liaisons from the New York City Board of Education.

  - ➤ Staff participated in a work group to organize, manage and coordinate the Department's efforts to serve children who have been prenatally exposed to drugs. This work group drafted a discussion paper, ***Study of Developmentally Appropriate Strategies for Children Who Have Been Prenatally Exposed to Drugs and Alcohol***, which includes findings and recommendations for improving practices and services to these young children.

  - ➤ Staff participated on the Interagency Work Group on Integrated Early Childhood Programs, formed to integrate children with special needs in early childhood programs and to develop an action agenda to eliminate barriers to such integration. This work group is a subcommittee of the Permanent Interagency Committee on Early Childhood Programs created by the Governor.

  - ➤ Nassau and Suffolk County Prekindergarten Programs participated in a conference, ***Building the Future***. Approximately, 120 prekindergarten staff attended the conference, which focused on topics such as hyperactivity, teaching children prenatally exposed to drugs and parent involvement.

  - ➤ Chapter 53 screening instruments were reviewed to implement a screening protocol which would identify children to be referred for evaluation and possible early intervention services and developmentally appropriate individualized educational planning.

- ***Training for Key Decisionmakers Made Accessible:*** All training related to the provision of special education, which is provided to thousands of key decisionmakers statewide by staff from the 53 Special Education Training and Resource Centers (SETRCs), is now held at accessible sites. Furthermore, reasonable accommodations are provided and training materials are available, upon request, in a variety of formats. Records are maintained regarding the type of reasonable accommodations requested and comments from individuals with disabilities who have participated in the training are evaluated to continuously improve the accessibility and the provision of reasonable accommodations.

- ***Increasing Awareness on the Technology Needs of Students with Disabilities:*** Articles are routinely included in the ***Technology Applications Quarterly (TAQ)*** newsletter on the use of technology in special education programs. In addition, the newsletter mailing list was revised to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive this publication. Three of the five issues of *TAQ* published thus far have included articles dealing with the needs of students with disabilities and technology.

- ***Accessibility Reviews of School Districts and BOCES:*** The Civil Rights Compliance Team of the

Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education conducted a series of 36 on-site reviews of school districts and BOCES to determine the status of accessibility and provide technical assistance to meet Section 504 requirements.

- ***New Disability Awareness Training Programs:*** New disability awareness programs have been developed that highlight changes in the perception of types of disabilities, as reflected in current literature.
  - ➤ A training program entitled, ***Increasing Staff Sensitivity to the Needs of Black Disabled Children and Their Families***, has been developed which will help ensure that curriculum and instruction are appropriate for black students.
  - ➤ Support continues for the six ***Special Education Administrators Leadership and Training Academies*** which provide critical information on developments in special education to this group of personnel.
  - ➤ The department is also encouraging the development of bilingual programs for teachers, psychologists, and social workers in New York City at the preservice level that will better prepare them to work effectively with the student population that exhibits wide cultural and linguistic variety.
- ***Parent Publications on Special Education for Non-English Speaking Persons:*** Parent publications on the education of students with disabilities will be developed in ten languages. A ***Parents Guide to Special Education*** has been completed in English and is being processed for translation into other languages and ***Parent Pamphlets*** which are a more readable version of the ***Parents Guide to Special Education*** are presently in production. Plans are also under way to produce the following publications:
  - ➤ ***Parents Guide to Special Education*** for parents of preschool-aged children with disabilities;
  - ➤ ***Technical Assistance Manual*** to facilitate the implementation of Federal laws and regulations designed to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities;
  - ➤ ***Manual for Committees on Special Education and Committees on Preschool Special Education***; and
- ***Manual on Alternative Testing Procedures*** for use with students with disabilities to ensure equal access to testing programs.
- ***Students with Disabilities who are Transitioning from Secondary Schools to Adult Services, Postsecondary Schools or Employment:*** A mechanism is being established for the collection of information on students with disabilities as they transition from school-age programs to adult services. This will assist the department and other State agencies in providing appropriate adult services for such students. Specific accomplishments include:
  - ➤ development of a manual for school district personnel regarding the provision of transition services to students with disabilities and their parents;
  - ➤ development of a plan, in cooperation with VESID, to conduct training for administrators, individuals with disabilities and their parents, and teachers regarding transition services;
  - ➤ completion of a process to identify 10 exemplary programs related to students with emotional difficulties. These programs will be made available to school districts throughout New York State; and
  - ➤ development and dissemination of a procedure for identifying school districts to qualify for the innovation programs for special education.
- ***Model Schools Program:*** The statewide replication of the ***Model Schools Program: Special Education Activities Using Technology*** will ensure that increased numbers of students with disabilities benefit from the use of technology at home and school. Specifically:
  - ➤ Teachers in participating schools received 15 hours of training on acquiring skills in appropriate tool software and the integration of these tools into the teaching-learning process. Special education teachers com-

prise part of the teams conducting the demonstrations for Model Schools.

- In the Madison-Oneida region, teachers in approximately 30 districts communicate in a ***Special Education Forum*** using on-line Technology Network Ties capabilities for computer-based conferencing. This forum also meets three times each year and these teachers participate in national, as well as local and regional forums, to share the use of technological solutions for special needs students. Parents of special education students were also trained in the use of computers to be "parent coaches" and pupils were given computers to use at home (home-tutoring) with the assistance of their parents.

- ***Students with Special Dietary Needs:*** The Office of Educational Finance and Management Services developed a letter for all district and school superintendents to send to parents and students informing them of reasonable accommodations available for students with special dietary needs and the procedures for requesting such services. Through this letter, parents of students with special dietary needs became aware of the procedures for obtaining the appropriate diet for their children who participate in school breakfast and lunch programs. In addition, meal service to children with disabilities was discussed at 13 bureau regional meetings.

- ***Technology for Students with Disabilities in Elementary and Secondary Education:*** All schools are now required to consider the needs of students with disabilities by the ***Long-Range Plan for Technology in Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State***. This plan is also being modified to include appropriate references to the needs of students with disabilities regarding the planning and implementation of technology in schools.

- ***Expanding Access to Technology Services Statewide:*** School district planning for technology, including technology used by students with disabilities, has been improved by expanding the Technology Planning for Improving Schools (TPIS) service statewide, through BOCES and Cooperative Service Application (COSER) agreements. In addition:

  - Training for regional staff at all 41 BOCES Regional staff, 9 BOCES Regional Information Centers, and component school district staff, has been provided on expanding the TPIS planning model to include students with disabilities. Furthermore, BOCES technology services provided through COSERS will also be expanded to cover all 41 BOCES and TPIS has subsequently been incorporated in the Model Schools Planning and Staff Development COSER.

  - New York City Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) school staff participated in an October workshop on technology applications for students with disabilities. Six SURR schools, which were selected to participate in the Apple Partnership Program, have adopted the TPIS model and New York City Central Board staff have been trained to serve as TPIS implementers.

- ***Training on Transporting Students with Disabilities:*** Over 35,000 school bus drivers and aides have been provided instruction in school bus safety, and where applicable, training addressing the special needs of children with disabilities. Also, approximately 40 master instructors have attended meetings statewide on these issues and approximately 650 school bus driver instructors will be provided instruction consistent with the curriculum which was prepared during the fall 1991. Over 700 supervisors and other transportation personnel received the same information at a summer workshop.

- ***Manual for Administrators of Nonpublic Schools:*** This manual is being revised to include information about the importance of accessibility for persons with disabilities. In addition, at a recent statewide conference, VESID materials were made available and a number of department staff members with expertise in areas related to people with disabilities participated in the ***Time to Consult*** segment of the program.

Emerging Issues

- Public and nonpublic schools need to evaluate accessibility for students, parents, and teachers with disabilities and remove physical barriers.

- There is a lack of appropriate and adequate space for quality integrated preschool programs for young children with disabilities, recruitment of special needs children who will benefit from these services, developmentally appropriate curriculum, quality supervision, and adequate classroom materials.

- Many individuals with disabilities still assume that reasonable accommodations are not available or will not be made available at training programs. More public information on services needs to be disseminated.

- There is a need for more positive collaboration among the adults working within integrated classrooms regarding appropriate curriculum, activities and assessment for *all* children enrolled.

- The U.S. Department of Education has established a task force to examine concerns and problems related to the provision of compensatory education services to students with disabilities. Of primary concern is the need for greater coordination of services in addressing educational needs of disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. The Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education will cooperate on improving coordination and assisting Federal clarification of policy.

- The development of instructional software, applications software and adaptive devices is ongoing. Networking must be expanded to communicate the varied uses and efficacy of these resources for special needs pupils.

- Additional emphasis needs to be placed on the promulgation of potential uses of technology for persons with disabilities, and the planning and implementation process.

- Some schools are reluctant to make dietary substitutions for students with disabilities who have special dietary needs and there is a reluctance of schools to inform parents that they will make accommodations for children with disabilities. There is also a need to define what constitutes a disability for the purpose of meal service, i.e., need for special diets for diabetics, hyperactive children.

- In discussions with the Commissioner's Advisory Committee for Pupil Transportation, an emerging issue has developed relating to facing wheel chairs forward on school buses. Although this appears to be a more desirable configuration than side facing, any mandated forward facing requirements would result in reduced bus capacity and higher cost. There appears to be insufficient injury and fatality statistics to provide guidance on this issue. An underlying issue related to planning special education transportation is greater involvement of the director of pupil transportation in the Individual Education Program process.

SECTION IV:
COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Issues Addressed by the Council

The Council is responsible for a wide range of activities designed to improve access for people with disabilities to department programs and services. These activities include responsibility for conducting the Section 504 self-evaluation required under Title II of the ADA, providing training and information to department staff on access issues, and continuing to improve the workplace for department employees with disabilities. This section of the report focuses on each of these major council responsibilities.

During the last two years, the council has addressed a number of issues related to how the department interacts as an **employer** of people with disabilities. Specifically, the council has focused on the following three issues:

- **reasonable accommodations** for department employees, including:
  - ➤ identifying resources within the department to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities; and
  - ➤ developing a policy for reasonable accommodation that ensures that the accommodation is provided in as timely a manner as possible and that the process is user friendly.
- **physical access and egress** of people with disabilities to department buildings; and
- **staff development training** related to working with employees with disabilities.

Council Accomplishments

In response to the issues described above, the council developed and assisted the department in implementing a number of policies and procedures in 1992. These procedures and policies are summarized below.

- ***Reasonable Accommodations:*** The department has long been a leader in employing people with disabilities and in providing reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, both current and potential. During 1992, the department provided reasonable accommodations to over 50 employees with disabilities. The department is committed to continuously improving its policies and procedures on this issue. During the past year, the council and the Office of Affirmative Action have:
  - ➤ Revised the **Section on Employees with Disabilities** within the State Education Department's Affirmative Action Plan;
  - ➤ Revised the department **Policy on the Purchase of Specialized Furniture and Equipment for Employees with Disabilities**.
  - ➤ Begun to establish a procedure to centralize fiscal resources within the department for the provision of reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities; and
  - ➤ Revised the **Reasonable Accommodations Policy** to ensure that it is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ***Physical Access and Egress:*** In response to concerns regarding accessibility, the council:
- Developed a policy which requires that all department sponsored meetings and conferences be held at accessible sites and reasonable accommodations be provided upon request;
- Completed accessibility reviews of the Cultural Education Center, Education Building, and Education Building Annex;
- Revised the ***Emergency Action Plans*** to include information on providing for the needs of all employees and visitors with special needs; and
- Developed a policy which requires that all department sponsored social functions be held at accessible sites.
- ***Staff Development Training:*** In response to the training needs identified by department staff, the

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council developed and provided, in cooperation with the Department of Civil Service, training to department supervisors on ***Working with Employees with Disabilities***. Since May 1991, training has been provided by staff from VESID, the Department of Civil Service, and the Office of Affirmative Action to over 500 department supervisors of professional and support staff.

The content of the training focused on providing supervisors with an increased awareness of the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities, skills in supervising and evaluating employees with disabilities, Federal and State laws and regulations related to disability issues and an awareness of department policies and procedures related to such employees. Evaluations completed by the supervisors who have taken part in this training have been extremely positive. In the future, this training will be included in the department's orientation for all new employees and information on replicating the training at other State agencies has been provided to the State Affirmative Action Council and to other State agency staff. Additional training will be provided during the coming year to regional department staff.

Survey of Department Services to Employees with Disabilities

To evaluate the success of its efforts in implementing the above policies and procedures, and the effect of the supervisor's training, the council developed and conducted in February 1992, a survey of all department employees to solicit information and opinions concerning the effect of these efforts to ensure full opportunities for employees with disabilities. The survey, which will be conducted annually as part of the evaluation process, asked employees with disabilities about the availability of reasonable accommodations, office accessibility and promotional opportunities. In addition, it asked employees questions designed to evaluate their levels of awareness of department policies and procedures related to physical and programmatic accessibility. Analysis of the results of the survey formed the basis of a cabinet-level discussion on recommendations to improve the provision of reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. Major concerns expressed by survey participants and the council's response to each are as follows:

Concern: **Accessibility in Department work sites has been fairly well accomplished in most cases, although there are still areas of concern.**

Response: The specific accessibility concerns identified in the survey have been forwarded to the subcommittee from the Office of the President of the University and Commissioner of Education. This subcommittee is implementing a comprehensive physical accessibility plan entitled, the ***Plan to Assure Department Compliance with the Recently Enacted Americans with Disabilities Act.*** This plan, developed by the Division of Education Business Management Services, covers both State-owned and leased buildings and includes the required self-evaluation, structural and non-structural changes, public notice, installed signage, etc. As part of the department's responsibility for implementing the requirements of the ADA, the Civil Rights Compliance Team of the Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education reviewed the Cultural Education Center, Education Building, and Education Building Addition for accessibility. Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts, where the department currently leases space, are under review. This systemic approach to identifying and addressing physical accessibility barriers will be used as a model for evaluating other department buildings.

Concern: **Efforts should continue to ensure that: (1) the appropriate reasonable accommodations are provided in a timely manner to qualified employees; (2) supervisors are aware of the procedures to obtain such accommodations; and (3) that supervisors understand the obligation and benefits of providing such accommodations to their staffs.**

Response: Training will be held regularly for department supervisors on working with employees with disabilities. Addi-

tional sessions for 1992 and 1993 of the training, ***Working with Employees with Disabilities***, have been scheduled and will be conducted statewide for regional staff.

In addition, the council has recently developed and the Office of Affirmative Action has implemented as of August 15, 1992, a ***Customer Satisfaction Survey on the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations***. This survey is given to each department employee when the requested reasonable accommodation has been received. The survey asks the employees to rate how timely the accommodation was provided, if they were treated courteously by staff during the process, and whether they received the accommodation that is appropriate to their needs. The comments will help the department continuously improve its process for providing reasonable accommodations.

Emerging Issues to be Addressed by the Intra-Agency Council

During 1993, the Intra-Agency Council will be addressing the following emerging issues. These issues resulted from the previously described survey and concerns forwarded to the council by individual department office implementation subcommittees.

- The Intra-Agency Council has been designated by the Commissioner as the mechanism to develop, implement, and monitor, as required by Title II of the ADA, a self-evaluation of all policies and practices that govern the administration of the department's programs, activities and services to ensure the full participation of individuals with disabilities. This self-evaluation was to be completed by January 26, 1993.

- The Intra-Agency Council needs to survey the department to determine if there is sufficient availability of assistive listening devices and other similar specialized equipment items and then notify staff of their locations and availability.

- The Intra-Agency Council needs to draft a uniform department policy on the provision and use of interpreter services for the deaf. Similarly, the Council should, once a policy is adopted, coordinate the establishment of a department contract or a series of regional contracts, for the provision of cost-effective interpreter services. The Office of the President of the University and the Commissioner of Education will work with the council on both the policy and the terms and conditions of the contract. In addition, the council should develop guidelines for department staff on the appropriate use of interpreter services.

- The Intra-Agency Council needs to coordinate a conference for all department employees on the impact of the ADA on department programs and services.

- The Intra-Agency Council needs to develop a program which recognizes the efforts of staff who have improved access for people with disabilities.

ATTACHMENT A

INTRA-AGENCY COUNCIL MEMBERS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

P. Alistair MacKinnon,
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OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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OFFICE OF HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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